

INDIANA CSP SUCCESS STORY

Parke and Fountain Counties, Indiana



Ken Canfield is a long term conservation farmer in northern Parke and southern Fountain County Indiana. Over the years, Ken has tried several different kinds of tillage systems, finally converting to no-till several years ago. Ken was looking for a system that would both protect the soil resource, as well as be economically viable. He has found that a no-till system allows him to farm with less equipment input, less labor, less cost for fuel, improved soil health, and equal or better yields than with conventional systems. Over the last few years, Ken has added cover crops to his system to further improve soil health and reduce inputs of chemical fertilizer.

Parke County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in partnership with the Fountain and Vermillion County SWCDs received a three year Clean Water Indiana grant to contract Larry Timm, a local long term no-till farmer, to work one-on-one with farmers to promote no-till, cover crops and soil health. Larry, along with NRCS District Conservationists Don Donovan and Andrew Brown have been working with Ken to improve his system. This partnership has helped Ken become a very successful with his cover crop and no-till system.

NRCS was involved in providing technical assistance for several years on no-till, cover crops, grassed waterways, and field borders to help Ken build his overall conservation plan leading up to his Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) plan. Ken has 4.7 acres of grassed waterways and 6.0 acres of CRP on his farms enrolled in CSP to improve wildlife habitat and control gully erosion. Ken enrolled 457.8 acres of land into CSP to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the program to reward his conservation efforts and to help him implement new technology in his operation. NRCS provided technical assistance in developing the CSP conservation plan, helping Ken make decisions on what additional activities he chose to implement over the period of his contract and completion of the CSP contract. Based on the plan, Ken will receive yearly CSP payments of \$10,189 for 5 years for a contract total of \$50,945. Ken chose three additional activities to implement with his contract; use of cover crop mixes, use of deep root crops to breakup soil compaction, and planting a cover crop that will scavenge residual nitrogen. This will assist Ken in addressing some of his resource concerns of reducing compaction, reducing commercial fertilizer by scavenging leftover nitrogen, and improving soil organic matter by using cover crop mixes. At this time, Ken is planting a cover crop mix with his split row planting with tillage radishes planted where he will be planting corn and peas in between the rows.

Overall, soil health and soil organic matter will improve with use of cover crops and no-till. Soil loss will be reduced, which will improve water quality in the streams and waterways that Ken's farms drain to. Wildlife habitat, cover and food will improve due to over winter cover from no-till and cover crops. Long term no-till will improve soil health which will lead to better yields with less input of commercial fertilizer, leading to a more profitable farming operation for Ken. Ken will be "growing" some of his nitrogen with the use of legume cover crops.

NRCS will continue to work with Ken on his no-till and cover crop system to fine tune and make any necessary changes to make the system profitable, improve the soil health as much possible, and reduce commercial inputs and loss of applied commercial fertilizer. NRCS will review Ken's progress each year of the CSP contract and process his CSP payments accordingly.